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SUBJECT: SUDAN REBEL ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING IN CHAD

REF: KHARTOUM 1461

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The UN/AU organized September 19-20 meeting in N'Djamena was billed as an opportunity to organize Sudan rebel movement delegations and positions before the October 27, 2007 negotiation in Tripoli, but from most accounts it was inconclusive on all fronts and lacked the presence of senior rebel leadership. Another attempt may be tried in early October, possibly in N'Djamena. JEM negotiator Lissan, in N'Djamena for the meeting, informed CDA that Chadian rebels at the Sudan border intended another try at unseating President Deby, however, he felt that the GOC was one step ahead of them. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Charge d'Affaires met with Boubou Niang, Deputy Head of the African Union (AU) Darfur Peace Agreement Implementation Team (DPIAT) and Vladimir Zhagora, Senior Political Affairs Officer in the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) on September 21 to discuss the AU/UN-organized meeting in N'Djamena of non-signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). The turnout for the meeting included JEM negotiator Ahmed Tugod Lissan and one representative of Khamis Abdullah's SLA wing. SLA's Ahmet Abd al-Shafi was not present. There were no representatives from SLM/Unity (apparently Abdullah Yahya had stated that internal problems precluded participation.) Senior statesman Ahmed Ibrahim Diraij, a NMRD representative and Arab leader Salah Abu Sura were present.

¶3. (SBU) Niang and Zhagora explained that it had been hoped that delegation composition and common negotiating positions could be discussed during the two day meeting. Unfortunately, movement turnout had been too low-level to achieve anything (although a request for capacity building was registered.) They commented on Abd Al-Wahid al-Nur's unrealistic list of preconditions, which included janjaweed disarmament, return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and peace-keeping troops from the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia exclusively.

¶4. (SBU) In a meeting September 22 with JEM negotiator Tugod Lissan, Lissan confirmed that the meeting had not advanced any issues but noted that he was staying in N'Djamena for a few weeks and there might be another attempt in early October to bring players together. He reiterated that the movements wanted to have a capacity building workshop before the October 27 meeting in Tripoli. He was also adamant that, as the non-signatories, only JEM and SLA were the appropriate interlocutors for the negotiations. He stated that the concerns of others (such as some of the newer Arab groups) could be accommodated, but, as they did not have a real presence on the ground in Darfur, they should not be at the table. As for Salah Abu Sura - a member of the Sudan Communist party - JEM would never recognize him or allow him to be part of the talks. He noted the positive presence of

Sulayman Jammous whom he described as experienced and open-minded. Jammous had the stature to encourage SLA independents Adam Bakhit, Adam Shogar and Sharif Hariri to coalesce.

15. (SBU) Lissan stated that the starting point for the negotiations was still an open issue. He felt that the approach used in Arusha - which he described as laying out issues without excluding those that were not in the DPA - was the most helpful tack to take. Looking at obstacles to an eventual peace, he mentioned the resettlement of Arabs from Chad and Niger. He stated that this would be a major issue - JEM was asking for these settlers to be removed from the areas where they were installing themselves. IDPs must not stay in the temporary areas determined by the government but must be returned home. Concerning the Hybrid Peace-Keeping Operation (PKO), he stated that this force may shore up the government's belief that it did not need to look at the root causes of the Darfur conflict - only at the superficial ones.

Concerning Khalid Ibrahim's comments to the press on reverting to force for an independent Darfur if the Tripoli talks did not succeed, Lissan intimated that this had an element of pre-negotiation grandstanding.

JEM ON SLA

16. (SBU) Lissan cautioned that it was impossible for the SLA to unify under one leadership. The wings could only be dealt with as separate movements. In a tour d'horizon of SLA leaders, Lissan described Abd al-Wahid as 'an obstacle.' He controlled IDP committees in 'show camps' which do his bidding and are able to appear more significant than they are. Abd al-Shafi, by contrast, had more support on the ground. He was more open minded than Abd al-Wahid, and he

NDJAMENA 00000755 002 OF 002

had the respect of the Fur intellectuals. Khamis Abdullah was not as strong on the ground and not as experienced politically, although he had Masalit support. Lissan argued that JEM was able to avoid some of the SLA's problems by having better organization; by having established a political wing before a military presence and by having cadres with more education and cohesive institutions. The NMRD was totally a Chadian creation. He acknowledged that there had been reports of JEM divisions. JEM field commanders (he mentioned Banda) had been dissatisfied and had tried to split the movement. There had been allegations of corruption and mismanagement on the ground; Banda and another field commander had been sidelined for abuses.

JEM ON ERITREA AND LIBYA

17. (SBU) Lissan also cautioned that Eritrea could be an obstacle. The Government of Eritrea wanted to host the talks in order to curry favor with Sudan government. They also had close relations with the head of Sudanese intelligence, Saleh Gosh. In any event, Eritrean efforts had not been able to attract the main players. Neither SLA nor JEM had gone to Asmara. Eritrea had only been able to attract the bit players: the 'Asmara Front' of Diraij, NMRD and Khamis Abdulla (who was kept there against his will.) Libya, on the other hand was strongly influencing the AU. The effect of 'Le Guide' could be seen in the AU's new position that they didn't want international forces - only Africans - in the Hybrid PKO. 'Sudan cannot say no to Libya, otherwise Libya will immediately start supporting the Sudanese rebels.'

JEM TAKE ON CHAD REBEL ACTION

18. (SBU) Lissan agreed to discuss the current situation of the Chadian rebels (with whom he had been crossing paths in Tripoli.) He stated that Chad rebel leaders Timan Erdimi and Mahamat Nouri intended to take one more shot at toppling the regime. (Comment: this expectation corresponds with GOC views. There has been a massive and widely observed positioning of Chadian troops on the border. End Comment.)

According to Lissan, the Tripoli Agreement (whereby Sudan and Chad agreed to desist in supporting rebel groups bent on the others' destabilization) was not being observed. The Chadian rebels were receiving ample support from Sudan. Queried as to whether JEM troops would support Chadian troops in any eventual clash with Chadian rebels, Lissan responded that this was not likely; Chadian troops were well-stationed along the border, JEM forces were not right now part of the defensive position. Furthermore, Chad had many informants among the rebel troops and was aware of rebel plans and movements.

LONG-TIME REBEL OBSERVER STRESSES NEED TO ORGANIZE SLA
AS FIRST STEP

19. (SBU) In a meeting with CDA September 24, Chad Ambassador to Sudan, Haroun Bahradine, agreed that the meeting had not succeeded, but ascribed it to invitations going out late. Another meeting was needed before October 27. But he cautioned that the negotiations would never advance unless the SLA had a chance to resolve internal differences. The presence of four SLA wings made it impossible for the movements as a whole to have a coherent position. (The four wings being those belonging to Abd al-Wahid, Yahya, al Shafi (whom he described as smart and the natural heir to al-Wahid) and Khamis Abdullah.) He also stated that the movements had no resources, and need additional financial support in order to 'travel to their people - hear their views - get the word out.'

TAMLYN